**HOW TO WRITE A THESIS STATEMENT**

To begin writing you thesis you must first ask yourself these important questions. Ultimately, this is what your paper should be about and this is what you should be focusing on:

* How did my person impact the era in which he/she lived?
* How did my person contribute to the era in which he/she lived?
* How did my event impact the era in which it took place?
* How did my event contribute to the era in which it took place?

To help you understand how you should write a thesis statement let’s take a topic which we are all familiar with, the Enlightenment. Much like the general topics you have chosen you know the Enlightenment is important, but let’s get a little more specific. The philosophes in the enlightenment were incredibly important, so let’s choose one of them. What about John Locke? He was pretty important right? After I have done 50 note cards worth of research (if not more), I am going to ask myself:

* How did John Locke impact or contribute to the era in which he lived?

Let’s brainstorm some good ideas. How did he impact or contribute to his era?

Ok, so now we have some good ideas about who John Locke was and why he was important. So now we are ready to write our thesis statement. Here are some general guidelines that should help you in writing your thesis statement:

**Argumentative Thesis Statements:**

“In an argumentative paper, you are making a claim about a topic and justifying this claim with reasons and evidence. This claim could be an opinion, a policy proposal, an evaluation, a cause-and-effect statement, or an interpretation. However, this claim must be a statement that people could possibly disagree with, because the goal of your paper is to convince your audience that your claim is true based on your presentation of your reasons and evidence. An argumentative thesis statement will tell your audience:

* your claim or assertion
* the reasons/evidence that support this claim
* the order in which you will be presenting your reasons and evidence”

<taken from: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl\_thesis.html>

**When writing your thesis you should think about the following guidelines:**

**1. A strong thesis takes some sort of stand.**

-why should I read your paper? It should be something I can say “No, you are wrong” too.

**2. A strong thesis justifies discussion.**

-should give me a taste of what your paper will be about. What are you writing 4-6 pages about?

**3. A strong thesis expresses one main idea.**

-you should not make your thesis 4-6 pages for your 4-6 page paper, you should include the main idea of your paper in one or at most, two sentences

**4. A strong thesis statement is specific.**

-you can also be abstract in addition to being specific – sometimes details are not the best for a thesis statement, but looking at something abstractly is better

<taken from: http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/thesis\_statement.shtml#strongthesis>

Remember that you are offering a way for me to understand your topic – you are not summarizing your topic!

<taken from: http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/thesis.html>

When your masterful thesis statement is written, you should ask yourself the following questions:

1. *"Do I answer the question?" (meaning the assignment’s question)*
2. *"Have I taken a position that others might challenge or oppose?"*
3. *“Does my thesis pass the 'So What?' test?"* Also known as the "What's the Big Deal?"
   * *you should bluntly ask yourself: Who cares? Why is my topic important?*
4. *"Does my essay support my thesis specifically and without wandering?"*
   * *this is very, very important, for this question having an outsider read your paper might be good (a parent, brother or sister)*

Let’s write our Enlightenment THESIS:

1. John Locke made a contribution to his era.
2. John Locke helped change the politics of his era.
3. John Locke helped change the politics of his era by introducing the social contract theory.
4. Through his social contract theory, John Locke started the French Revolution, which permanently altered French society.

This may not be a perfect thesis statement, but it is a good thesis statement to start off with. Think of ways you can improve it. If your research contradicts your thesis, you need to adjust your thesis statement.

Now, for your next upcoming process piece, you need to give me the following:

1. an **introductory paragraph** which has the **thesis statement** as one of the last sentences (preferably the last sentence)
2. after this paragraph you should include an outline as to what your paper will be discussing. You should already have a preliminary outline which you have been using to take your notes.

**Brief outline for John Locke:**

1. What was the social contract theory
2. Why might it have appealed to so many people?
   1. What were their lives like that they were looking for a change?
   2. Who was interested in the theory?
      1. Define this geographically, demographically
3. How did people learn about the social contract theory?
   1. How is it people were able to learn about it (literacy…time period)
4. Where are some examples of the theory’s use?
   1. How was it used?
   2. Was it effective?
   3. Did this bring about any kind of a change in society?

Notice that in some way or another, all of the information included in this outline will help me in proving that my thesis statement is true. Background information is ok as long as it relates back to your thesis. Notice that I do not include background information on John Locke though, how would it relate to this thesis?

**Do’s and Don’ts for writing your paper:**

1. Do include citations with specific page numbers, this may require you to go back and find some of the pages your notes were from, since many of you seemed to have left them off your note cards…pay attention to these sheets I give you!
2. Don’t use the word I. There is no reason to use this word. I am actually going to take points off if you use it. LET ME REPEAT THAT IN BIG LETTERS AND **BOLD LETTERS: I AM ACTUALLY GOING TO TAKE POINTS OFF IF YOU USE THE WORD “I.”** 
   1. (hitting ctrl+f on a pc will bring up a “find box” – in this box you can type a word, phrase, or letter and the computer will find what your are searching for wherever it appears in the paper – to be sure you do not have I in it, you may want to do this before handing it in)
3. Do introduce the quotes you are putting in your paper. Don’t just start a sentence with a quote. You can do something like: As Keeler states in his work The History of the World “peaches taste delicious” (25).
   1. Notice that at the end of the quote there is not punctuation before the ” mark and that in the parenthetical citation the author’s name was not included, since you already used it in the sentence. Notice that after the parenthetical citation, you put a period to end the sentence. Do not do this: …delicious.” (25) And then start a new sentence. Logically it doesn’t make sense because you are ending your thought with the period and then putting the corresponding page number into the next sentence (which is a separate thought).